

# **INFORMATION FOR THE PRESS**

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### **BIOLOGICAL SURVEY REPORTS HIGHLIGHTS OF YEAR'S CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES**

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National wildlife-conservation activities during 1939 were signalized by the beginning of operations under the Federal Aid to wildlife Restoration Act and by substantial progress in the waterfowl-restoration program, Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson, chief of the Bureau of Biological Survey, said today in his annual report to the Secretary of Agriculture. The dedication of the first national wildlife experiment station at Patuxent, Md., the Survey chief declared, is another landmark in the field of conservation.

The Biological Survey was transferred to the Department of the Interior on July 1, in accordance with President Roosevelt's Reorganization Plan No. 2 and this is the last of a series of 54 annual reports the Survey has made to the Secretary of Agriculture.

At the close of the first year of the Federal-aid program, 42 States had enacted the required legislation assenting to the program, 1 had a similar bill pending, and 5 remained ineligible, Doctor Gabrielson reported. "The wide variety of well-considered plans already submitted," he declared, "attests the earnest desire of State conservation authorities to advance the cause of wildlife restoration effectively."

Under the Federal Aid act, Congress may authorize operating appropriations not to exceed the annual revenue from the 10-percent tax on sporting arms and ammunition. The initial appropriation to the Bureau was \$1,000,000 to which was

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added about \$300,000 from State funds. This year \$1,500,000 was appropriated by Congress.

Gabrielson reported an increase of 12 refuges and of nearly 2 million acres in the nation-wide system of national wildlife refuges, bringing the total under the jurisdiction of the Biological Survey to 260, with an acreage of more than 13-1/2 million. An average of 32 full-strength C.C.C. camps and 1 side camp was used in water impoundment and other construction work on 32 of these areas in 24 States.

"Attracted by the improved habitat provided, waterfowl and other migratory birds, as well as resident species, are visiting these sanctuaries in ever increasing numbers," the Survey chief said. He added that on many units species long absent or previously unknown there are becoming established as part of the nesting population.

Discussing the importance of the Patuxent Research Refuge, which was dedicated by Secretary Wallace on June 3, Gabrielson said the area is significant in its promise of future improvements in wildlife-management practices. He described the refuge as an extensive tract, close to the seat of Government, containing forests, streams, and ponds on which qualified biologists can study wildlife and its needs through all seasons of the year.

Editors — Other features of the report summarized here:

The results of studies of the food habits of North American diving ducks and of the principal foods of shore-water and diving ducks generally, including identification, range, and propagation of the various plants, were published in two technical bulletins.

Preliminary aerial surveys in northern Canada located a waterfowl-breeding ground of the first magnitude extending about 70 miles along the Arctic coast and back into a region rarely visited by white men.

Large-scale vaccination on fur farms and other methods of immunization, notably against distemper, proved of protective and financial value.

Predator-waterfowl relationships studied on national wildlife refuges disclosed the average nesting success to be 60 percent, with most of the losses caused, in about the order of depredation importance, by skunks, bull snakes, crows, magpies, coyotes, and snapping turtles.

Other wildlife studies revealed that nearly 500,000 game and other birds were banded, bringing the grand total of banded birds to more than 3-1/4 million, from which more than 200,000 return and recovery records are available for study. Almost 6 million big-game animals were reported in the second Nation-wide big-game inventory conducted by the Survey. The food habits of coyotes are in the main economically beneficial or harmless, since more than 75 percent of their feeding is on rodents and carrion.

Further protection of domestic livestock, poultry, and game resulted from the taking of 104,000 predatory animals in cooperative campaigns. Under Biological Survey supervision, nearly 35-1/2 million acres of rodent-infested areas were treated to protect agricultural and grazing lands.

Law-enforcement work was greatly facilitated when Congress provided funds for undercover operations to prevent illegal game dealing. A joint aerial patrol along the International boundary was made by wildlife agents of the Alaska Game Commission and Provincial police officers of Canada and was responsible for smashing a well-organized ring of smugglers.